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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY East Germany/Communist China

REPORT

25X1

SUBJECT Recruitment of East German Engineers for Communist China

DATE DISTR. 11 April 1955

NO. OF PAGES 2

DATE OF INFO.

REQUIREMENT NO. RD

25X1

PLACE ACQUIRED

REFERENCES

DATE ACQUIRED

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1. At the end of November 1954, unmarried East German engineers at the Projektierungsbuero fuer Kraftverkehr und Strassenwesen, Berlin C 2, Dorotheenstrasse 26/27, were offered employment in Communist China. Bridge building engineers were desired to plan and supervise construction projects. The monthly salary which was offered was 3,000 rubles (gold); 1,500 rubles would be paid in cash; the remaining 1,500 rubles would be paid into a savings account. The engineers going to China would travel and work together in groups. They would live in hotels and would be required to remain for two years in China. At the end of that period they would receive an eight-week vacation with all expenses paid. Communist China would pay for their travel (by air) to China but the engineers would have to pay for the return trip out of their own pockets. Official trips made by them in China would be paid for at an unspecified rate per kilometer. Several engineers agreed to accept contracts and the contracts were submitted to the Communist Chinese diplomatic mission in Berlin.
2. After the contracts had been submitted the East German Ministry for Transport suddenly called them back. This was interpreted as an indication that bridge building and construction engineers were needed in East Germany for work connected with rearmament.
3. In late 1954, Kurt Leiser, State Secretary for Vehicular Traffic and Highways (Staatssekretaer fuer Kraftverkehr und Strassenwesen - SKS), and individuals from the Ministry for Reconstruction were attempting to recruit engineers for work in Communist China. Engineers recruited for general construction work (allgemeiner Hochbau) were to begin working in China on 1 February 1955; highway construction engineers were to begin on 1 March. As a part of this campaign, an attempt was made by the cadre chief of the Entwurfsbuero fuer Hochbau, Schwerin,

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Dr. Kuelz-Strasse, at the beginning of December 1954, to recruit engineers for this purpose. It was stated that the obligation would be for two years rather than three, as had been the case previously. The prospective recruits were told that the Germans would live together in barracks in China and that it was particularly desired that the engineers' wives accompany them. The pay earned in China would be put into a savings account in East Germany and the rates of pay would be the same as in East Germany. However, the amount of 24 DME per day would be paid for living expenses abroad, and possibly there would also be special bonuses. Annual leave time allowed would amount to six weeks per year, but it was not clear whether or not the leave would have to be taken in China.

4. Prospects of special care for the medical, cultural and social needs of the engineers while in China were held out, but nothing specific was said. Likewise, nothing specific was said concerning the legal position of the engineers, who had misgivings as to what protection they might be given in case something went wrong with their work and the usual Communist accusations of sabotage were raised against them by the Chinese authorities.
5. It was stated that transportation to China would be by air from Berlin to Moscow and from there by the Peking Express, but it was not made clear how the travel expenses would be handled and who would pay them.
6. It was indicated that the projects which the engineer recruits would be working on in China would be refrigeration plants, granaries (Speicher) and highways, and it was made clear that these were projects of the Communist Chinese government, not of a German firm.

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